

**Equivalent Courses  
Based on an Equivalent Graduation Policy PI 18.02(5)  
Frequently Asked Question and Answers**

**1. What is the purpose for the equivalent graduation policy?**

The equivalent graduation policy provides districts the opportunity to expand options available to students to meet high school graduation requirements through “equivalent courses.”

**2. What are high school equivalent courses?**

High School equivalent courses are those that have been determined to meet specific criteria through an approved equivalent graduation policy. An “equivalent graduation policy” is defined in Chapter PI 18.02(5) as “A board policy which meets the credit requirements specified for each subject area (§118.33 Wis. Stats.), but which permits selected equivalent courses as long as such courses contain the time allotment and substantially the same objectives to develop the knowledge, concepts, and skills of the course for which an equivalent is proposed.”

**3. What are the current state high school graduation requirements for each subject area as specified in §118.33 Wis. Stats.?**

Based on §118.33(1)(a) Wis. Stats., the following requirements are necessary to receive a high school diploma:

**1. In the high school grades, all of the following:**

- a.** At least 4 credits of English including writing composition.
- b.** At least 3 credits of social studies including state and local government.
- c.** At least 3 credits of mathematics. The school board shall award a pupil up to one mathematics credit for successfully completing in the high school grades a course in computer sciences that the department has determined qualifies as computer sciences according to criteria established by the department. The school board shall award a pupil up to one mathematics credit for successfully completing in the high school grades a career and technical education course that the school board determines satisfies a mathematics requirement, but may not award any credit for that course if the school board awards any credit for that same course under subd. 1. d.

- d. At least 3 credits of science. The school board shall award a pupil a science credit for successfully completing in the high school grades each course in agriculture that the department has determined qualifies as science according to criteria established by the department. The school board shall award a pupil up to one science credit for successfully completing in the high school grades a career and technical education course that the school board determines satisfies a science requirement, but may not award any credit for that course if the school board awards any credit for that same course under subd. 1. c.
- e. At least 1.5 credits of physical education.

2. In grades 7 to 12, at least 0.5 credit of health education.

The state superintendent shall encourage school boards to require an additional 8.5 credits selected from any combination of vocational education, foreign languages, fine arts and other courses.

**4. Can the approved “equivalent courses” be counted for meeting high school graduation requirements?**

Yes, that is the purpose of the equivalent graduation policy. For example, a school board could recognize a specific Career and Technical Education (CTE) course that has substantial science as being “equivalent” to a science course and that course could meet the requirements for graduation. This example includes science, but applies to any subjects that are part of the state high school graduation requirements.

**5. If an “equivalent course” is approved, what type of DPI license is required for the teacher to teach this course?**

The license required for teachers to teach equivalent courses does not change. For example, if a CTE teacher is teaching a course that is equivalent for mathematics, the CTE teacher needs to hold an appropriate CTE license for the course he or she is teaching. The CTE course is not taught by the mathematics teacher.

**6. What is the process to apply for equivalency through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction?**

Local districts must do the following:

- Establish a committee to review the proposed equivalent course.
- Review the knowledge and skills of the course the district is seeking for equivalency.
- Outline how the proposed equivalent course aligns with the state standards for that subject area and the equivalent area. There are several templates on the DPI website referred to as “crosswalks” that have been started and include the alignment to state standards for common courses in CTE. For more information see the websites below:
  - Agriculture Science <http://dpi.wi.gov/ag/asec.html>
  - Business & Information Technology <http://dpi.wi.gov/bit/equivalency.html>
  - Food Science <http://dpi.wi.gov/fce/fdsci.html>
  - Technology Science <http://dpi.wi.gov/te/terp.html>
- The local teacher/committee reviews the proposed equivalent curriculum to the crosswalk and includes the units/course objectives including instruction time.

- Request school board approval for the equivalent course.
- Submit to DPI all documentation which includes:
  - List of committee members and their titles
  - Official DPI form(s)
  - Documentation of the equivalent course content/syllabus with instruction time
  - Completion of the crosswalk
- The equivalent course will be documented on the student's transcripts by the school district as an equivalent course (see question #9 for details).
- The equivalent course documents will be reviewed by DPI and the school districts will be notified within 60 days of receipt.
- If the equivalent course is approved, the information will be entered into a database, which will be shared with the UW-System for their reference. The database will be updated annually and shared with the UW-System each year.

**7. How are equivalent courses listed in a course description book?**

Equivalent courses must be listed under the original content area department in the course description book. For example, a Business Education course titled "Business Communications" that has been approved for an English equivalent credit would be listed with the Business Education courses.

**8. How is an equivalent course documented on a student's transcript?**

All equivalent courses will have a specific designation. See the list below. This designation will be listed next to the course title on the student transcript.

(ES) = equivalent for science

(EM) = equivalent for mathematics

(ESS) = equivalent for social studies

(EE)= equivalent for English

For example, a veterinary science course taught by an agriculture instructor for a science equivalent credit would be listed on the student's transcript as Veterinary Science (ES).

**9. How does the UW-System honor equivalent courses/credits?**

Upon approval from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction a database is built and shared with the UW-System admission offices. Honoring the equivalency is different for each University. There are on-going discussions with the UW system to determine how equivalent courses will be accepted by UW system for admission purposes.

The following attachments list how the current credits will be honored at UW system universities. Continued conversations on newer equivalency options will be conducted soon.

<http://dpi.wi.gov/ag/pdf/UWSystemAgSciApprovalChart.pdf> Agriculture/Science chart

<http://dpi.wi.gov/te/pdf/UWSystemTEApprovalChart.pdf> PLTW/Science chart